REMOTE CONTROL CAPABILITIES GIVE COMPUTER LAB TEACHERS IN ASHVILLE CITY SCHOOLS ADDED CONTROL OF STUDENTS

By using Danware's NetOp School to remotely control computer lab workstations, teachers in this western North Carolina city can help keep students on task, share private text messages and allow students to demonstrate to the entire class. Teachers can also customize tests to match curriculum and prepare classroom materials offline at home without installing extra software on their own computers.

When a middle school student in Steve West's computer lab at Asheville Middle School in Asheville, N.C. found a way to get out on the Internet during class, the veteran business teacher called the young woman up to his desk. She was appalled to see that he had a record of every site she had visited on the Internet. After that, he never again had a problem with that student wandering off task.

The NetOp School software West uses in his classroom allows him to view and record each student's monitor from his own screen. If a student wanders off task, the teacher knows immediately and can send a private text message to the student to bring them back on track. The software also allows teachers to share any screen with the rest of the class, freeze a student's mouse, or turn controls over to a student for a demonstration.

"Being able to see every student's screen on my computer is a boon to me," West said. "It has changed my teaching style. Now, I don't have to run around the classroom from computer to computer to keep students involved. I can focus on teaching."

Admittedly, the software is not always popular with all students. West said one of his favorite features is an "Attention" button he can click with his mouse when he notices a student wandering off task. When he clicks it, the student's screen goes black, the mouse is frozen and bright yellow letters warn "Busted. Please get back on task. Thank you."

"When that happens, the students know they have been caught, nod at me and get back to work," he said. "I am upfront with them from the start. I tell my students on the first day of class that they have no expectation of privacy when they are on a computer in my classroom."

West said parents of the students are unanimous in their support of NetOp School when they see it demonstrated at open houses. And other district teachers are also are big fans of the software.

Currently, NetOp School is being used in 11 classrooms in three buildings. In his school, there are three computer labs that are open for use by any teacher for any subject. At one time or another, almost every student will come in contact with NetOp School, he said.

"From a teacher's point of view, this software is very easy to use," he said. "It is so intuitive that everyone catches on quickly. NetOP School thinks like a teacher."

Established in 1887, Ashville City Schools operate 10 schools – from preschool to high school – located in western North Carolina in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The district employs 339 teachers to work with about 3,800 students. The district is one of the best in the state, ranking second among 115 districts in the number of No Child Left Behind goals met. And its high school seniors have the state's second highest average Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores.

Three years ago, West approached district officials to purchase NetOp School. The staff in the IT department said they did not want another piece of software to manage. West made them a promise.

"I said that if you get this for me, I'll install it, train other teachers how to use it and take care of any problems it may have," he said. "That was a great deal for me. I use it every day in my classroom and spend very little time taking care of problems. Any troubles we have are almost always related to the network.

"If all software was this easy, tech people would be out of work."

The latest version of NetOp School, version 5.0, also features an improved test center, allowing teachers to customize tests so that they match the curriculum being taught. It also allows for offline preparation so that teachers can work on curriculum at home without installing NetOp on their home computer.

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